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(5) Has a plan for continued efforts to make health services available to participants at the clinic or through written agreements with health care providers when health services are provided through referral;

(6) Provides nutrition education services to participants, in compliance with § 246.11 and FNS guidelines and instructions;

(7) Implements a food delivery system prescribed by the State agency pursuant to § 246.12 and approved by FNS;

(8) Maintains complete, accurate, documented and current accounting of all Program funds received and expended;

(9) Maintains on file and has available for review, audit, and evaluation all criteria used for certification, including information on the area served, income standards used, and specific criteria used to determine nutritional risk; and

(10) Does not discriminate against persons on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap; and compiles data, maintains records and submits reports as required to permit effective enforcement of the non-discrimination laws.

(c) *Indian agencies.* Each Indian State agency shall ensure that all local agencies under its jurisdiction serve primarily Indian populations.

(d) *Health and human service agencies.* When a health agency and a human service agency comprise the local agency, both agencies shall together meet all the requirements of this part and shall enter into a written agreement which outlines all Program responsibilities of each agency. The agreement shall be approved by the State agency during the application process and shall be on file at both the State and local agency. No Program funds shall be used to reimburse the health agency for the health services provided. However, costs of certification borne by the health agency may be reimbursed.

(e) *Health or human service agencies and private physicians.* When a health or human service agency and private physician(s) comprise the local agency, all parties shall together meet all of the requirements of this part and shall enter into a written agreement which

outlines the inter-related Program responsibilities between the physician(s) and the local agency. The agreement shall be approved by the State agency during the application process and shall be on file at both agencies. The local agency shall advise the State agency on its application of the name(s) and address(es) of the private physician(s) participating and obtain State agency approval of the written agreement. A competent professional authority on the staff of the health or human service agency shall be responsible for the certification of participants. No Program funds shall be used to reimburse the private physician(s) for the health services provided. However, costs of certification data provided by the physician(s) may be reimbursed.

(f) *Outreach/Certification In Hospitals.* The State agency shall ensure that each local agency operating the program within a hospital and/or that has a cooperative arrangement with a hospital:

(1) Advises potentially eligible individuals that receive inpatient or outpatient prenatal, maternity, or postpartum services, or that accompany a child under the age of 5 who receives well-child services, of the availability of program services; and

(2) To the extent feasible, provides an opportunity for individuals who may be eligible to be certified within the hospital for participation in the WIC Program.

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985, as amended at 59 FR 11500, Mar. 11, 1994; 63 FR 63974, Nov. 18, 1998]

Subpart C—Participant Eligibility

§ 246.7 Certification of participants.

(a) *Integration with health services.* To lend administrative efficiency and participant convenience to the certification process, whenever possible, Program intake procedures shall be combined with intake procedures for other health programs or services administered by the State and local agencies. Such merging may include verification procedures, certification interviews, and income computations. Local agencies shall maintain and make available for distribution to all pregnant,

postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children applying for and participating in the Program a list of local resources for drug and other harmful substance abuse counseling and treatment.

(b) *Program referral and access.* State and local agencies shall provide WIC Program applicants and participants or their designated proxies with information on other health-related and public assistance programs, and when appropriate, shall refer applicants and participants to such programs.

(1) The State agency shall ensure that written information concerning the Food Stamp Program, the program for Aid to Families with Dependent Children under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act (AFDC), and the Child Support Enforcement Program under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, is provided on at least one occasion to adult participants and adult individuals applying for the WIC Program for themselves or on behalf of others.

(2) The State agency shall provide each local WIC agency with materials showing the maximum income limits, according to family size, applicable to pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 5 under the medical assistance program established under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (in this section, referred to as the "Medicaid Program"). The local agency shall, in turn, provide to adult individuals applying or reapplying for the WIC Program for themselves or on behalf of others, written information about the Medicaid Program. If such individuals are not currently participating in Medicaid but appear to have family income below the applicable maximum income limits for the program, the local agency shall also refer these individuals to Medicaid, including the referral of infants and children to the appropriate entity in the area authorized to determine eligibility for early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) services, and, the referral of pregnant women to the appropriate entity in the area authorized to determine presumptive eligibility for the Medicaid Program, if such determinations are being offered by the State.

(3) State agencies shall provide WIC services at community and migrant

health centers, Indian Health Services facilities, and other federally health care supported facilities established in medically underserved areas to the extent feasible.

(4) Local agencies shall provide information about other potential sources of food assistance in the local area to adult individuals applying or reapplying in person for the WIC Program for themselves or on behalf of others, when such applicants cannot be served because the Program is operating at capacity in the local area.

(5) Each local agency that does not routinely schedule appointments shall schedule appointments for employed adult individuals seeking to apply or reapply for participation in the WIC Program for themselves or on behalf of others so as to minimize the time such individuals are absent from the workplace due to such application.

(6) Each local agency shall attempt to contact each pregnant woman who misses her first appointment to apply for participation in the Program in order to reschedule the appointment. At the time of initial contact, the local agency shall request an address and telephone number where the pregnant woman can be reached.

(c) *Eligibility criteria.* To be certified as eligible for the Program, infants, children, and pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women shall:

(1) In all State agencies except for Indian State agencies, meet the requirement that the applicant reside within the jurisdiction of the State. Indian State agencies may establish the requirement that applicants reside within their jurisdiction. All State agencies may determine a service area for any local agency, and may require that an applicant reside within the service area. However, the State agency may not use length of residency as an eligibility requirement.

(2) Meet the income criteria specified in paragraph (d) of this section.

(3) Meet the nutritional risk criteria specified in paragraph (e) of this section.

(d) *Income criteria and income eligibility determinations.* The State agency

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shall establish, and provide local agencies with, income guidelines, definitions, and procedures to be used in determining an applicant's income eligibility for the Program.

(1) *Income eligibility guidelines.* The State agency may prescribe income guidelines either equaling the income guidelines established under section 9 of the National School Lunch Act for reduced-price school meals or identical to State or local guidelines for free or reduced-price health care. However, in conforming Program income guidelines to health care guidelines, the State agency shall not establish Program guidelines which exceed the guidelines for reduced-price school meals or are less than 100 percent of the revised poverty income guidelines issued annually by the Department of Health and Human Services. Program applicants who meet the requirements established by paragraph (d)(2)(vi)(A) of this section shall not be subject to the income limits established by State agencies under this paragraph.

(i) *Local agency income eligibility guidelines.* Different guidelines may be prescribed for different local agencies within the State provided that the guidelines are the ones used by the local agencies for determining eligibility for free or reduced-price health care.

(ii) *Annual adjustments in the income guidelines.* On or before June 1 each year, FNS will announce adjustments in the income guidelines for reduced-price meals under section 9 of the National School Lunch Act, based on annual adjustments in the revised poverty income guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services.

(iii) *Implementation of the income guidelines.* On or before July 1 each year, each State agency shall announce and transmit to each local agency the State agency's family size income guidelines, unless changes in the poverty income guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services do not necessitate changes in the State or local agency's income guidelines. The State agency may implement revised guidelines concurrently with the implementation of income guidelines under the Medicaid

program established under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 of *et seq.*). The State agency shall ensure that conforming adjustments are made, if necessary, in local agency income guidelines. The local agency shall implement (revised) guidelines not later than July 1 of each year for which such guidelines are issued by the State.

(2) *Income eligibility determinations.* The State agency shall ensure that local agencies determine income through the use of a clear and simple application form provided or approved by the State agency.

(i) *Timeframes for determining income.* In determining the income eligibility of an applicant, the State agency may instruct local agencies to consider the income of the family during the past 12 months and the family's current rate of income to determine which indicator more accurately reflects the family's status. However, persons from families with adult members who are unemployed shall be eligible based on income during the period of unemployment if the loss of income causes the current rate of income to be less than the State or local agency's income guidelines for Program eligibility.

(ii) *Definition of "Income".* If the State agency uses the National School Lunch reduced-priced meal income guidelines, as specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, it shall use the following definition of income: Income for the purposes of this part means gross cash income before deductions for income taxes, employees' social security taxes, insurance premiums, bonds, etc. Income includes the following—

(A) Monetary compensation for services, including wages, salary, commissions, or fees;

(B) Net income from farm and non-farm self-employment;

(C) Social Security benefits;

(D) Dividends or interest on savings or bonds, income from estates or trusts, or net rental income;

(E) Public assistance or welfare payments;

(F) Unemployment compensation;

(G) Government civilian employee or military retirement or pensions or veterans' payments;

(H) Private pensions or annuities;

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(I) Alimony or child support payments;

(J) Regular contributions from persons not living in the household;

(K) Net royalties; and

(L) Other cash income. Other cash income includes, but is not limited to, cash amounts received or withdrawn from any source including savings, investments, trust accounts and other resources which are readily available to the family.

(iii) *Use of a State or local health care definition of "Income"*. If the State agency uses State or local free or reduced-price health care income guidelines, as it is authorized to do in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, it may use the State or local definition or definitions of income used for the health care eligibility determinations. The State agency shall ensure, however, that the State or local agency's definition of income does not count the value of in-kind housing and other in-kind benefits and payments or benefits listed in paragraph (d)(2)(iv) of this section as income for Program purposes, and that families with gross income, as defined in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section, in excess of 185 percent of the Federal guidelines specified under paragraph (d)(1) of this section are not rendered eligible for Program benefits, except that persons who meet the requirements of paragraph (d)(2)(vi) of this section shall not be subject to limitations established under this paragraph.

(iv) *Income exclusions*. (A) In determining income eligibility, the State agency may exclude from consideration as income any basic allowance for quarters received by military services personnel residing off military installations. State agencies which choose to exercise this option shall implement it uniformly with respect to all Program applicants from military families.

(B) The value of inkind housing and other inkind benefits, shall be excluded from consideration as income in determining an applicant's eligibility for the program.

(C) Payments or benefits provided under certain Federal programs or acts are excluded from consideration as income by legislative prohibition. The

payments or benefits which must be excluded from consideration as income include, but are not limited to:

(1) Reimbursements from the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Pub. L. 91-646, sec. 216, 42 U.S.C. 4636);

(2) Any payment to volunteers under Title I (VISTA and others) and Title II (RSVP, foster grandparents, and others) of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93-113, sec. 404(g), 42 U.S.C. 5044(g)) to the extent excluded by that Act;

(3) Payment to volunteers under section 8(b)(1)(B) of the Small Business Act (SCORE and ACE) (Pub. L. 95-510, sec. 101, 15 U.S.C. 637(b)(1)(D));

(4) Income derived from certain submarginal land of the United States which is held in trust for certain Indian tribes (Pub. L. 94-114, sec. 6, 25 U.S.C. 459e);

(5) Payments received under the Job Training Partnership Act (Pub. L. 97-300, sec. 142(b), 29 U.S.C. 1552(b));

(6) Income derived from the disposition of funds to the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians (Pub. L. 94-540, sec. 6);

(7) Payments received under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (Pub. L. 100-241, sec. 15, 43 U.S.C. sec. 1626(c));

(8) The value of assistance to children or their families under the National School Lunch Act, as amended (Pub. L. 94-105, sec. 9(d), 42 U.S.C. sec. 1760(e)), the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (Pub. L. 89-642, sec. 11(b), 42 U.S.C. sec. 1780(b)), and the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (Pub. L. 95-113, sec. 1301, 7 U.S.C. sec. 2017(b));

(9) Payments by the Indian Claims Commission to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Indian Nation or the Apache Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation (Pub. L. 95-433, sec. 2, 25 U.S.C. 609c-1);

(10) Payments to the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the Penobscot Nation or any of their members received pursuant to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 (Pub. L. 96-420, sec. 6, 9(c), 25 U.S.C. 1725(i), 1728(c));

(11) Payments under the Low-income Home Energy Assistance Act, as

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amended (Pub. L. 99-125, sec. 504(c), 42 U.S.C. sec. 8624(f));

(12) Student financial assistance received from any program funded in whole or part under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, including the Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, State Student Incentive Grants, National Direct Student Loan, PLUS, College Work Study, and Byrd Honor Scholarship programs, which is used for costs described in section 472 (1) and (2) of that Act (Pub. L. 99-498, section 479B, 20 U.S.C. 1087uu). The specified costs set forth in section 472 (1) and (2) of the Higher Education Act are tuition and fees normally assessed a student carrying the same academic workload as determined by the institution, and including the costs for rental or purchase of any equipment, materials, or supplies required of all students in the same course of study; and an allowance for books, supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses for a student attending the institution on at least a half-time basis, as determined by the institution. The specified costs set forth in section 472 (1) and (2) of the Act are those costs which are related to the costs of attendance at the educational institution and do not include room and board and dependent care expenses;

(13) Payments under the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, as amended by the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1989 (Pub. L. 100-707, sec. 105(i), 42 U.S.C. sec. 5155(d));

(14) Effective July 1, 1991, payments received under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, as amended by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-392, sec. 501, 20 U.S.C. sec. 2466d);

(15) Payments pursuant to the Agent Orange Compensation Exclusion Act (Pub. L. 101-201, sec. 1);

(16) Payments received for Wartime Relocation of Civilians under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Pub. L. 100-383, sec. 105(f)(2), 50 App. U.S.C. sec. 1989b-4(f)(2));

(17) Value of any child care payments made under section 402(g)(1)(E) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the

Family Support Act (Pub. L. 100-485, sec. 301, 42 U.S.C. sec. 602 (g)(1)(E));

(18) Value of any "at-risk" block grant child care payments made under section 5081 of Pub. L. 101-508, which amended section 402(i) of the Social Security Act;

(19) Value of any child care provided or paid for under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, as amended (Pub. L. 102-586, Sec. 8(b)), 42 U.S.C. 9858q);

(20) Mandatory salary reduction amount for military service personnel which is used to fund the Veteran's Educational Assistance Act of 1984 (GI Bill), as amended (Pub. L. 99-576, sec. 303(a)(1), 38 U.S.C. sec. 1411 (b));

(21) Payments received under the Old Age Assistance Claims Settlement Act, except for per capita shares in excess of \$2,000 (Pub. L. 98-500, sec. 8, 25 U.S.C. sec. 2307);

(22) Payments received under the Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act, unless the income of the family equals or exceeds 80 percent of the median income of the area (Pub. L. 101-625, sec. 522(i)(4), 42 U.S.C. sec. 1437f nt);

(23) Payments received under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987, unless the income of the family increases at any time to not less than 50 percent of the median income of the area (Pub. L. 100-242, sec. 126(c)(5)(A), 25 U.S.C. sec. 2307);

(24) Payments received under the Sac and Fox Indian claims agreement (Pub. L. 94-189, sec. 6);

(25) Payments received under the Judgment Award Authorization Act, as amended (Pub. L. 97-458, sec. 4, 25 U.S.C. sec. 1407 and Pub. L. 98-64, sec. 2(b), 25 U.S.C. sec. 117b(b));

(26) Payments for the relocation assistance of members of Navajo and Hopi Tribes (Pub. L. 93-531, sec. 22, 22 U.S.C. sec. 640d-21);

(27) Payments to the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewas, Arizona (Pub. L. 97-403, sec. 9);

(28) Payments to the Blackfeet, Grosventre, and Assiniboine tribes (Montana) and the Papago (Arizona) (Pub. L. 97-408, sec. 8(d));

(29) Payments to the Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap Indian community and the Assiniboine Tribe of

the Fort Peck Indian Reservation (Montana) (Pub. L. 98-124, sec. 5);

(30) Payments to the Red Lake Band of Chippewas (Pub. L. 98-123, sec. 3);

(31) Payments received under the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan Distribution of Judgment Funds Act (Pub. L. 99-346, sec. 6(b)(2)); and

(32) Payments to the Chippewas of Mississippi (Pub. L. 99-377, sec. 4(b)).

(v) *Verification of information.* A State or local agency may require verification of information which it determines necessary to confirm income eligibility for Program benefits.

(vi) *Adjunct or automatic income eligibility.* (A) The State agency shall accept as income-eligible for the Program any applicant who documents that he/she is:

(1) Certified as fully eligible to receive food stamps under the Food Stamp Act of 1977, or certified as fully eligible, or presumptively eligible pending completion of the eligibility determination process, to receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act or Medical Assistance (i.e., Medicaid) under Title XIX of the Social Security Act; or

(2) A member of a family that is certified eligible to receive assistance under AFDC, or a member of a family in which a pregnant woman or an infant is certified eligible to receive assistance under Medicaid.

(B) The State agency may accept, as evidence of income within Program guidelines, documentation of the applicant's participation in State-administered programs not specified in this paragraph that routinely require documentation of income, provided that those programs have income eligibility guidelines at or below the State agency's Program income guidelines.

(C) Persons who are adjunctively income eligible, as set forth in paragraphs (d)(2)(vi)(A) of this section, shall not be subject to the income limits established under paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(vii) *Income eligibility of pregnant women.* A pregnant woman who is ineligible for participation in the program because she does not meet income guidelines shall be considered to have

satisfied the income guidelines if the guidelines would be met by increasing the number of individuals in her family by the number of embryos or fetuses in utero. The same increased family size may also be used for any of the pregnant woman's categorically eligible family members. The State agency shall allow applicants to waive this increase in family size.

(viii) *Income eligibility of Indian applicants.* If an Indian State agency (or a non-Indian State agency which acts on behalf of a local agency operated by an Indian organization or the Indian Health Service) submits census data or other reliable documentation demonstrating to FNS that the majority of the Indian households in a local agency's service area have incomes at or below the State agency's income eligibility guidelines, FNS may authorize the State agency to approve the use of an income certification system under which the local Indian agency shall inform each Indian applicant household of the maximum family income allowed for that applicant's family size. The local agency shall ensure that the applicant, or the applicant's parent or caretaker, signs a statement that the applicant's family income does not exceed the maximum. The local agency may verify the income eligibility of any Indian applicant.

(ix) *Income eligibility of instream migrant farmworkers and their family members.* Instream migrant farmworkers and their family members with expired Verification of Certification cards shall be declared to satisfy the State agency's income standard; Provided, however, that the income of that instream migrant farmworker family is determined at least once every 12 months. Any determination that members of an instream migrant farmworker family have met the income standard, either in the migrant's home base area before the migrant has entered the stream for a particular agricultural season, or in an instream area during the agricultural season, shall satisfy the income criteria in any State for any subsequent certification while the migrant is instream during the 12-month period following the determination.

(e) *Nutritional risk.* To be certified as eligible for the Program, applicants

who meet the Program's eligibility standards specified in paragraph (c) of this section must be determined to be at nutritional risk. A competent professional authority on the staff of the local agency shall determine if a person is at nutritional risk through a medical and/or nutritional assessment. This determination may be based on referral data submitted by a competent professional authority not on the staff of the local agency. Nutritional risk data shall be documented in the participant's file and shall be used to assess an applicant's nutritional status and risk, tailor the food package to address nutritional needs, design appropriate nutrition education, and make referrals to health and social services for follow-up, as necessary and appropriate.

Except as stated in paragraph (e)(1)(v) of this section, at least one determination of nutritional risk must be documented at the time of certification in order for an income eligible applicant to receive WIC benefits.

(1) *Determination of nutritional risk.* (i) *Required nutritional risk data.* (A) At a minimum, height or length and weight measurements shall be performed and/or documented in the applicant's file at the time of certification. In addition, a hematological test for anemia such as a hemoglobin, hematocrit, or free erythrocyte protoporphyrin test shall be performed and/or documented at certification for applicants with no other nutritional risk factor present. For applicants with a qualifying nutritional risk factor present at certification, such test shall be performed and/or documented within 90 days of the date of certification. However, for breastfeeding women 6-12 months postpartum, such hematological tests are not required if a test was performed after the termination of their pregnancy. In addition, such hematological tests are not required, but are permitted, for infants under nine months of age. All infants nine months of age and older (who have not already had a hematological test performed or obtained, between the ages of six and nine months), shall have a hematological test performed between nine and twelve months of age or obtained from referral sources. This

hematological test does not have to occur within 90 days of the date of certification. Only one test is required for children between 12 and 24 months of age, and this test should be done 6 months after the infant test, if possible. At the State or local agency's discretion, the hematological test is not required for children ages two and older who were determined to be within the normal range at their last certification. However, the hematological test shall be performed on such children at least once every 12 months. Hematological test data submitted by a competent professional authority not on the staff of the local agency may be used to establish nutritional risk. However, such referral hematological data must:

(1) Be reflective of a woman applicant's category, meaning the test must have been taken for pregnant women during pregnancy and for postpartum or breastfeeding women following termination of pregnancy;

(2) Conform to the anemia screening schedule for infants and children as outlined in paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(B) of this section; and

(3) Conform to recordkeeping requirements as outlined in paragraph (i)(4) of this section.

(B) Height or length and weight measurements and, with the exceptions specified in paragraph (e)(1)(v) of this section, hematological tests, shall be obtained for all participants, including those who are determined at nutritional risk based solely on the established nutritional risk status of another person, as provided in paragraphs (e)(1)(iv) and (e)(1)(v) of this section.

(ii) *Timing of nutritional risk data.* (A) *Weight and height or length.* Weight and height or length shall be measured not more than 60 days prior to certification for program participation.

(B) *Hematological test for anemia.* (1) For pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, and child applicants, the hematological test for anemia shall be performed or obtained from referral sources at the time of certification or within 90 days of the date of certification. The hematological test for anemia may be deferred for up to 90 days from the time of certification for applicants who have

at least one qualifying nutritional risk factor present at the time of certification. If no qualifying risk factor is identified, a hematological test for anemia must be performed or obtained from referral sources (with the exception of presumptively eligible pregnant women).

(2) Infants nine months of age and older (who have not already had a hematological test performed, between six and nine months of age, by a competent professional authority or obtained from referral sources), shall between nine and twelve months of age have a hematological test performed or obtained from referral sources. Such a test may be performed more than 90 days after the date of certification.

(3) For pregnant women, the hematological test for anemia shall be performed during their pregnancy. For persons certified as postpartum or breastfeeding women, the hematological test for anemia shall be performed after the termination of their pregnancy. For breastfeeding women who are 6-12 months postpartum, no additional blood test is necessary if a test was performed after the termination of their pregnancy. The participant or parent/guardian shall be informed of the test results when there is a finding of anemia, and notations reflecting the outcome of the tests shall be made in the participant's file. Nutrition education, food package tailoring, and referral services shall be provided to the participant or parent/guardian, as necessary and appropriate.

(iii) *Breastfeeding dyads.* A breastfeeding woman may be determined to be a nutritional risk if her breastfed infant has been determined to be a nutritional risk. A breastfed infant can be certified based on the mother's medical and/or nutritional assessment. A breastfeeding mother and her infant shall be placed in the highest priority level for which either is qualified.

(iv) *Infants born to WIC mothers or women who were eligible to participate in WIC.* An infant under six months of age may be determined to be at nutritional risk if the infant's mother was a Program participant during pregnancy or of medical records document that the woman was at nutritional risk during

pregnancy because of detrimental or abnormal nutritional conditions detectable by biochemical or anthropometric measurements or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions.

(v) *Presumptive eligibility for pregnant women.* A pregnant woman who meets the income eligibility standards may be considered presumptively eligible to participate in the program, and may be certified immediately without an evaluation of nutritional risk for a period up to 60 days. A nutritional risk evaluation of such woman shall be completed not later than 60 days after the woman is certified for participation. A hematological test for anemia is not required to be performed within the 60-day period, but rather within 90 days, unless the nutritional risk evaluation performed does not identify a qualifying risk factor. If no qualifying risk factor is identified, a hematological test for anemia must be performed or obtained from referral sources before the 60-day period elapses. Under the subsequent determination process, if the woman does not meet any qualifying nutritional risk criteria, including anemia criteria, the woman shall be determined ineligible and may not participate in the program for the reference pregnancy after the date of the determination. Said applicant may subsequently reapply for program benefits and if found to be both income eligible and at qualifying nutritional risk may participate in the program. Persons found ineligible to participate in the program under this paragraph shall be advised in writing of the ineligibility, of the reasons for the ineligibility, and of the right to a fair hearing. The reasons for the ineligibility shall be properly documented and shall be retained on file at the local agency. In addition, if the nutritional risk evaluation is not completed within the 60-day timeframe, the woman shall be determined ineligible.

(vi) *Regression.* A participant who has previously been certified eligible for the Program may be considered to be at nutritional risk in the next certification period if the competent professional authority determines there is a possibility of regression in nutritional status without the supplemental foods.

The State agency may limit the number of times and circumstances under which a participant may be certified due to the possibility of regression.

(2) *Nutritional risk criteria.* The following are examples of nutritional risk conditions which may be used as a basis for certification. These examples include—

(i) Detrimental or abnormal nutritional conditions detectable by biochemical or anthropometric measurements, such as anemia, underweight, overweight, abnormal patterns of weight gain in a pregnant woman, low birth weight in an infant, or stunting in an infant or child;

(ii) Other documented nutritionally related medical conditions, such as clinical signs of nutritional deficiencies, metabolic disorders, pre-eclampsia in pregnant women, failure to thrive in an infant, chronic infections in any person, alcohol or drug abuse or mental retardation in women, lead poisoning, history of high risk pregnancies or factors associated with high risk pregnancies (such as smoking; conception before 16 months postpartum; history of low birth weight, premature births, or neonatal loss; adolescent pregnancy; or current multiple pregnancy) in pregnant women, or congenital malformations in infants or children, or infants born of women with alcohol or drug abuse histories or mental retardation.

(iii) Dietary deficiencies that impair or endanger health, such as inadequate dietary patterns assessed by a 24-hour dietary recall, dietary history, or food frequency checklist; and

(iv) Conditions that predispose persons to inadequate nutritional patterns or nutritionally related medical conditions, such as homelessness or migrancy.

(3) *Nutritional risk priorities.* In determining nutritional risk, the State agency shall develop and include in its State Plan, specific risk conditions by priority level with indices for identifying these conditions. The criteria shall be used statewide and in accordance with the priority system as set forth in paragraph (e)(4) of this section.

(4) *Nutritional risk priority system.* The competent professional authority shall fill vacancies which occur after a local

agency has reached its maximum participation level by applying the following participant priority system to persons on the local agency's waiting list. Priorities I through VI shall be utilized in all States. The State agency may, at its discretion, expand the priority system to include Priority VII. The State agency may set income or other sub-priority levels within any of these seven priority levels. The State agency may expand Priority III, IV, or V to include high-risk postpartum women. The State agency may place pregnant or breastfeeding women and infants who are at nutritional risk solely because of homelessness or migrancy in Priority IV; children who are at nutritional risk solely because of homelessness or migrancy in Priority V; and postpartum women who are at nutritional risk solely because of homelessness or migrancy in Priority VI, *OR*, the State agency may place pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women, infants, and children who are at nutritional risk solely because of homelessness or migrancy in Priority VII.

(i) *Priority I.* Pregnant women, breastfeeding women and infants at nutritional risk as demonstrated by hematological or anthropometric measurements, or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions which demonstrate the need for supplemental foods.

(ii) *Priority II.* Except those infants who qualify for Priority I, infant up to six months of age of Program participants who participated during pregnancy, and infants up to six months of age born of women who were not Program participants during pregnancy but whose medical records document that they were at nutritional risk during pregnancy due to nutritional conditions detectable by biochemical or anthropometric measurements or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions which demonstrated the person's need for supplemental foods.

(iii) *Priority III.* Children at nutritional risk as demonstrated by hematological or anthropometric measurements or other documented medical conditions which demonstrate the child's need for supplemental foods.

(iv) *Priority IV.* Pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and infants at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern.

(v) *Priority V.* Children at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern.

(vi) *Priority VI.* Postpartum women at nutritional risk.

(vii) *Priority VII.* Individuals certified for WIC solely due to homelessness or migrancy and, at State agency option, and in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (e)(1)(iii) of this section, previously certified participants who might regress in nutritional status without continued provision of supplemental foods.

(f) *Processing standards.* The local agencies shall process applicants within the following timeframes:

(1) *Waiting lists.* When the local agency is serving its maximum caseload, the local agency shall maintain a waiting list of individuals who visit the local agency to express interest in receiving Program benefits and who are likely to be served. However, in no case shall an applicant who requests placement on the waiting list be denied inclusion. State agencies may establish a policy which permits or requires local agencies to accept telephone requests for placement on the waiting list. The waiting list shall include the person's name, address or phone number, status (e.g., pregnant, breastfeeding, age of applicant), and the date he or she was placed on the waiting list. Individuals shall be notified of their placement on a waiting list within 20 days after they visit the local agency during clinic office hours to request Program benefits. For those State agencies establishing procedures to accept telephone requests for placement on a waiting list, individuals shall be notified of their placement on a waiting list within 20 days after contacting the local agency by phone. The competent professional authority shall apply the participant priority system as specified in paragraph (e)(4) of this section to the waiting list to ensure that the highest priority persons become Program participants first when caseload slots become available.

(2) *Timeframes for processing applicants.* (i) When the local agency is not

serving its maximum caseload, the local agency shall accept applications, make eligibility determinations, notify the applicants of the decisions made and, if the applicants are to be enrolled, issue food or food instruments. All of these actions shall be accomplished within the timeframes set forth below.

(ii) The processing timeframes shall begin when the individual visits the local agency during clinic office hours to make an oral or written request for Program benefits. To ensure that accurate records are kept of the date of such requests, the local agency shall, at the time of each request, record the applicant's name, address and the date. The remainder of the information necessary to determine eligibility shall be obtained by the time of certification. Medical data taken prior to certification may be used as provided in paragraph (g)(4) of this section.

(iii) The local agency shall act on applications within the following timeframes:

(A) Special nutritional risk applicants shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 10 days of the date of the first request for Program benefits; except that State agencies may provide an extension of the notification period to a maximum of 15 days for those local agencies which make written request, including a justification of the need for an extension. The State agency shall establish criteria for identifying categories of persons at special nutritional risk who require expedited services. At a minimum, however, these categories shall include pregnant women eligible as Priority I participants, and migrant farmworkers and their family members who soon plan to leave the jurisdiction of the local agency.

(B) All other applicants shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 20 days of the date of the first request for Program benefits.

(iv) Each local agency using a retail purchase system shall issue a food instrument(s) to the participant at the same time as notification of certification. Such food instrument(s) shall provide benefits for the current month or the remaining portion thereof and shall be redeemable immediately upon

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receipt by the participant. Local agencies may mail the initial food instrument(s) with the notification of certification to those participants who meet the criteria for the receipt of food instruments through the mail, as provided in § 246.12(r)(8).

(v) Each local agency with a direct distribution or home delivery system shall issue the supplemental foods to the participant within 10 days of issuing the notification of certification.

(g) *Certification periods.* (1) Program benefits shall be based upon certifications established in accordance with the following timeframes:

(i) Pregnant women shall be certified for the duration of their pregnancy and for up to six weeks postpartum.

(ii) Postpartum women shall be certified for up to six months postpartum.

(iii) Breastfeeding women shall be certified at intervals of approximately six months and ending with the breastfed infant's first birthday.

(iv) Infants shall be certified at intervals of approximately six months, except that the State agency may permit local agencies under its jurisdiction to certify infants under six months of age for a period extending up to the first birthday provided the quality and accessibility of health care services are not diminished.

(v) Children shall be certified at intervals of approximately six months and ending with the end of the month in which a child reaches the fifth birthday.

(2) The State agency may authorize local agencies under its jurisdiction to establish shorter certification periods than outlined in paragraph (g)(1) of this section on a case-by-case basis. If the State agency exercises this option, it shall issue guidance for use by local agencies in establishing the shorter periods.

(3) In cases where there is difficulty in appointment scheduling for persons referenced in paragraphs (g)(1) (iii), (iv) and (v) of this section, the certification period may be shortened or extended by a period not to exceed 30 days.

(h) *Actions affecting participation in mid-certification.* (1) The State agency shall ensure that local agencies disqualify an individual during a certifi-

cation period if, on the basis of a reassessment of Program eligibility status, the individual is determined ineligible; provided, however, that an individual determined adjunctively income eligible under paragraph (d)(2)(vi)(A) (I) or (2) of this section or income eligible under paragraph (d)(2)(vi)(B) of this section is not disqualified solely on the basis of a determination they no longer participate in AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, or another qualified State-administered program or are no longer a member of a family which contains an AFDC recipient or a pregnant woman or an infant receiving Medicaid. The State agency shall ensure that local agencies disqualify such an individual during a certification period, if on the basis of a reassessment of Program eligibility, the individual is no longer deemed income eligible under paragraph (d)(2)(vi) (A) or (B) of this section and does not meet the income eligibility requirements of paragraph (d)(1) of this section. The State agency may authorize local agencies to disqualify an individual during the certification period for the following reasons:

(i) Participant abuse, including, but not limited to the infractions listed in § 246.12(k)(2); or

(ii) Failure to obtain food instruments or supplemental foods for a number of consecutive months, as specified by the State agency, evidenced by indicators such as failure to pick up supplemental foods or food instruments, nonreceipt of food instruments as evidenced by return of mailed instruments, or failure to have an electronic benefit transfer card revalidated to authorize the purchase of supplemental foods.

(2) If a State agency experiences funding shortages, it may be necessary to discontinue Program benefits to a number of certified participants. Such action may be taken only after the State agency has explored alternative actions. If taken, the action should affect the least possible number of participants and should affect participants whose nutritional and health status would be least impaired by withdrawal of Program benefits. The State may discontinue benefits by—

(i) Disqualifying a group of participants; and/or

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(ii) Withholding benefits of a group with the expectation of providing benefits again when funds are available.

(3) When a State agency elects to discontinue benefits to a number of certified participants due to insufficient funds for a period of time, it shall not enroll new participants during that period.

(i) *Certification forms.* All certification data for each person certified shall be recorded on a form (or forms) which are provided by the State agency. The information on the forms shall include—

- (1) Name and address;
- (2) Date of initial visit to apply for participation;
- (3) Information regarding income eligibility for the Program as specified in paragraph (d) of this section;
- (4) The date of certification and the date nutritional risk data were taken if different from the date of certification;
- (5) Height or length, weight, and hematological test results;
- (6) The specific nutritional risk conditions which established eligibility for the supplemental foods. Documentation should include health history when appropriate to the nutritional risk condition, with the applicant's or applicant's parent's or caretaker's consent;
- (7) The signature and title of the competent professional authority making the nutritional risk determination, and, if different, the signature and title of the administrative person responsible for determining income eligibility under the Program; and
- (8) The following statement with a space for the signature of the applicant, parent, or caretaker to sign after reading or being read the following statement:

I have been advised of my rights and obligations under the Program. I certify that the information I have provided for my eligibility determination is correct, to the best of my knowledge. This certification form is being submitted in connection with the receipt of Federal assistance. Program officials may verify information on this form. I understand that intentionally making a false or misleading statement or intentionally misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding facts may result in paying the State agency, in cash, the value of the food benefits improperly issued to me and may subject me to

civil or criminal prosecution under State and Federal law.

(9) In States exercising the authority to disclose information pursuant to § 246.26(d)(2), a statement, to be added to the statement required under paragraph (i)(8) of this section, acknowledging that the chief State health officer (or in the case of Indian State agencies, the governing authority) may authorize disclosure of information provided by the applicant or participant to representatives of public organizations, designated by such chief State officer or governing authority, which administer health or welfare programs that serve persons categorically eligible for the WIC Program. This statement shall also indicate that such information can be used by the recipient organizations only to determine the eligibility of WIC applicants and participants for programs administered by such organizations, and to conduct outreach for such programs.

(j) *Notification of participant rights and responsibilities.* In order to inform applicants and participants or their parents or caretakers of Program rights and responsibilities, the following information shall be provided. Where a significant number or proportion of the population eligible to be served needs the information in a language other than English, reasonable steps shall be taken to provide the information in appropriate languages to such persons, considering the scope of the Program and the size and concentration of such population.

(1) During the certification procedure, every Program applicant, parent or caretaker shall be informed of the illegality of dual participation.

(2) At the time of certification, each Program participant, parent or caretaker shall read, or have read to him or her, the statement provided in paragraph (i)(8) of this section and the following sentences:

(i) "Standards for eligibility and participation in the WIC Program are the same for everyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, handicap, or sex."

(ii) "You may appeal any decision made by the local agency regarding your eligibility for the Program."

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(iii) "The local agency will make health services and nutrition education available to you, and you are encouraged to participate in these services."

(3) If the State agency implements the policy of disqualifying a participant for not picking up supplemental foods or food instruments in accordance with paragraph (h)(1)(ii) of this section, it shall provide notice of this policy and of the importance of regularly picking up food instruments or supplemental foods to each participant, parent or caretaker at the time of each certification.

(4) At least during the initial certification visit, each participant, parent or caretaker shall receive an explanation of how the local food delivery system operates and shall be advised of the types of health services available, where they are located, how they may be obtained and why they may be useful.

(5) Persons found ineligible for the Program during a certification visit shall be advised in writing of the ineligibility, of the reasons for the ineligibility, and of the right to a fair hearing. The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and shall be retained on file at the local agency.

(6) A person who is about to be suspended or disqualified from program participation at any time during the certification period shall be advised in writing not less than 15 days before the suspension or disqualification. Such notification shall include the reasons for this action, and the participant's right to a fair hearing. Further, such notification need not be provided to persons who will be disqualified for not picking up supplemental foods or food instruments in accordance with paragraph (h)(1)(ii) of this section.

(7) When a State or local agency pursues collection of a claim pursuant to § 246.23(c) against an individual who has been improperly issued benefits, the person shall be advised in writing of the reason(s) for the claim, the value of the improperly issued benefits which must be repaid, and of the right to a fair hearing.

(8) Each participant, parent or caretaker shall be notified not less than 15 days before the expiration of each cer-

tification period that certification for the Program is about to expire.

(9) If a State agency must suspend or terminate benefits to any participant during the participant's certification period due to a shortage of funds for the Program, it shall issue a notice to such participant in advance, as stipulated in paragraph (j)(6) of this section. Such notice shall also include the categories of participants whose benefits are being suspended or terminated due to such shortage.

(k) *Transfer of certification.* (1) Each State agency shall ensure issuance of a Verification of Certification card to every participant who is a member of a family in which there is a migrant farmworker or any other participant who is likely to be relocating during the certification period. Certifying local agencies shall ensure that Verification of Certification cards are fully completed.

(2) The State agency shall require the receiving local agency to accept Verification of Certification cards from participants, including participants who are migrant farmworkers or members of their families, who have been participating in the Program in another local agency within or outside of the jurisdiction of the State agency. A person with a valid Verification of Certification card shall not be denied participation in the receiving State because the person does not meet that State's particular eligibility criteria.

(3) The Verification of Certification card is valid until the certification period expires, and shall be accepted as proof of eligibility for Program benefits. If the receiving local agency has waiting lists for participation, the transferring participant shall be placed on the list ahead of all waiting applicants.

(4) The Verification of Certification card shall include the name of the participant, the date the certification was performed, the date income eligibility was last determined, the nutritional risk condition of the participant, the date the certification period expires, the signature and printed or typed name of the certifying local agency official, the name and address of the certifying local agency and an identification number or some other means of

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accountability. The Verification of Certification card shall be uniform throughout the jurisdiction of the State agency.

(l) *Dual participation.* (1) The State agency shall be responsible for the following:

(i) In conjunction with the local agency, the prevention and detection of dual participation within each local agency and between local agencies.

(ii) In areas where local agency serves the same population as an Indian State agency or a CSFP agency, entering into an agreement with the CSFP or Indian State agency for the detection and prevention of dual participation. The agreement must be made prior to operation within the same area and must be in writing.

(iii) Immediate disqualification from one of the programs or clinics for participants found in violation due to dual participation. Where deliberate misrepresentation is involved, the participant may be disqualified from participation in both programs or clinics as specified in § 246.12(k)(2).

(2) At certification, and when issuing food or food instruments, the local agency shall check the identification of each participant. For an infant or child participant, an immunization record, birth certificate, or other records that local agency personnel consider adequate to establish identity, shall be acceptable.

(m) *Certification without charge.* The certification procedure shall be performed at no cost to the applicant.

(n) *Certification of persons in homeless facilities and institutions.* (1) Pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants or children who meet the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section, and who reside in a homeless facility, shall be considered eligible for the Program and shall be treated equally with all other eligible applicants at the local agency where they apply for WIC benefits, Provided that: the State or local agency has taken reasonable steps to:

(i) Establish, to the extent practicable, that the homeless facility meets the following conditions with respect to resident WIC participants:

(A) The homeless facility does not accrue financial or in-kind benefit from a

person's participation in the Program, e.g., by reducing its expenditures for food service because its residents are receiving WIC foods;

(B) Foods provided by the WIC Program are not subsumed into a communal food service, but are available exclusively to the WIC participant for whom they were issued;

(C) The homeless facility places no constraints on the ability of the participant to partake of the supplemental foods and nutrition education available under the Program;

(ii) Contact the homeless facility periodically to ensure continued compliance with these conditions; and

(iii) Request the homeless facility to notify the State or local agency if it ceases to meet any of these conditions.

(2) The State agency may authorize or require local agencies to make the Program available to applicants who meet the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section, but who reside in institutions which meet the conditions of paragraphs (n)(1)(i)(A)-(C) of this section with respect to resident WIC participants.

(3) The State or local agency shall attempt to establish to the best of its ability, whether a homeless facility or institution complies with the conditions of paragraphs (n)(1)(i)(A)-(C) of this section with respect to WIC participants. If caseload slots are available, full certification periods shall be provided to the following:

(i) Participants who are residents of a homeless facility or institution which has been found to be in compliance with the conditions of paragraph (n)(1)(i)(A)-(C) of this section;

(ii) Participants who are residents of a homeless facility or institution whose compliance with the conditions of paragraphs (n)(1)(i)(A)-(C) of this section has not yet been established; and

(iii) Participants for whom no other shelter alternative is available in the local agency's service delivery area.

(4) If a homeless facility or institution has been determined to be non-compliant during the course of a participant's initial certification period, participants applying for continued benefits may be certified again, but the State agency shall discontinue

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issuance of WIC foods, except infant formula, to the participant in such accommodation until the accommodation's compliance is achieved or alternative shelter arrangements are made. If certified, such participants shall continue to be eligible to receive all other WIC benefits, such as nutrition education and health care referral services.

(5) The State agency shall continue to the end of their certification periods the participation of residents of a homeless facility or institution which ceases to comply with the conditions of paragraphs (n)(1)(i)(A)-(C) of this section.

(6) As soon as the State or local agency determines that a homeless facility/institution does not meet the conditions of paragraphs (n)(1)(i) (A)-(C) of this section, it shall refer all participants using such accommodation to any other accommodations in the area which meet these conditions.

(o) *Drug and other harmful substance abuse screening.* When a State agency determines that screening is necessary to fulfill the referral requirements in this part, the State agency must require screening for the use of drugs and other harmful substances. When such screening is required, it shall:

(1) Be limited to the extent the State agency deems necessary to fulfill the referral requirement of §246.4(a)(8) of this part and the drug and other harmful substance abuse information requirement of §246.11(a)(3) of this part; and

(2) Be integrated into certification process as part of the medical or nutritional assessment.

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985, as amended at 52 FR 21236, June 4, 1987; 53 FR 35301, Sep. 13, 1988; 54 FR 51295, Dec. 14, 1989; 55 FR 3387, Feb. 1, 1990; 57 FR 34506, Aug. 5, 1992; 58 FR 11506, Feb. 26, 1993; 59 FR 11500, Mar. 11, 1994; 60 FR 19490, Apr. 19, 1995; 63 FR 63974, Nov. 18, 1998; 64 FR 70177, Dec. 16, 1999]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 64 FR 70177, Dec. 16, 1999, §246.7 was amended by revising the introductory text of paragraph (e), by removing the introductory text of paragraph (e)(1), by redesignating paragraphs (e)(1)(i), (e)(1)(ii), (e)(1)(iii), and (e)(1)(iv) as paragraphs (e)(1)(iii), (e)(1)(iv), (e)(1)(v), and (e)(1)(vi) respectively, by adding new paragraphs (e)(1)(i) and (e)(1)(ii), by adding new headings to newly redesignated paragraphs

(e)(1)(iii), (e)(1)(iv), and (e)(1)(vi), and by revising newly redesignated paragraph (e)(1)(v), effective Jan. 18, 2000. For the convenience of the user, the superseded text follows.

§ 246.7 Certification of participants.

* * * * *

(e) *Nutritional risk.* To be certified as eligible for the Program, applicants who meet the Program's eligibility standards specified in paragraph (c) of this section must be determined to be at nutritional risk. A competent professional authority on the staff of the local agency shall determine if a person is a nutritional risk through a medical and/or nutritional assessment. This determination may be based on referral data submitted by a competent professional authority not on the staff of the local agency.

(1) *Determination of nutritional risk.* At a minimum, height or length and weight shall be measured, and a hematological test for anemia such as a hemoglobin, hematocrit, or free erythrocyte protoporphyrin test shall be performed. However, such hematological tests are not required for infants under six months of age and, at the State or local agency's discretion, the blood test is not required for children who were determined to be within the normal range at their last certification. However, the blood test shall be performed on such children at least once every 12 months. Height or length and weight measurements and, with the exceptions specified in this paragraph, blood tests, shall be obtained for all participants, including those who are determined at nutritional risk based solely on the established nutritional risk status of another person, as provided in paragraphs (e)(1)(i) and (e)(1)(ii) of this section. Weight and height or length shall be measured, and a blood test shall be conducted, not more than 60 days prior to certification for program participation, provided that such data for persons certified as pregnant women shall be collected during their pregnancy, and such data for persons certified as postpartum and breastfeeding women shall be collected after the termination of their pregnancy.

* * * * *

(v) A pregnant woman who meets income eligibility standards may be considered presumptively eligible to participate in the program, and may be certified immediately without an evaluation of nutritional risk for a period up to 60 days. A nutritional risk evaluation of such woman shall be completed not later than 60 days after the woman is certified for participation. Under this subsequent determination process, if the woman does not meet nutritional risk criteria, the

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woman shall be determined ineligible and may not participate in the program after the date of the determination. Notification of the ineligibility determination shall be given in accordance with paragraph (j)(5) of this section. In addition, if the nutritional risk evaluation is not completed within the 60 day timeframe, the woman's participation shall end when her initial certification period expires. As set forth in paragraph (j)(8) of this section, notification must be given prior to any expiration of the certification period.

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§ 246.8 Nondiscrimination.

(a) *Civil rights requirements.* The State agency shall comply with the requirements of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Department of Agriculture regulations on nondiscrimination (7 CFR parts 15, 15a and 15b), and FNS instructions to ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under the Program. Compliance with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and regulations and instructions issued thereunder shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Notification to the public of the nondiscrimination policy and complaint rights of participants and potentially eligible persons;
- (2) Review and monitoring activity to ensure Program compliance with the nondiscrimination laws and regulations;
- (3) Collection and reporting of racial and ethnic participation data as required by title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and
- (4) Establishment of grievance procedures for handling complaints based on sex and handicap.

(b) *Complaints.* Persons seeking to file discrimination complaints may file

them either with the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, USDA, Washington, DC 20250 or with the Office established by the State agency to handle discrimination grievances or complaints. All complaints received by State or local agencies which allege discrimination based on race, color, national origin, or age shall be referred to the Secretary of Agriculture or Director, Office of Equal Opportunity. A State or local agency may process complaints which allege discrimination based on sex or handicap if grievance procedures are in place.

(c) *Non-English materials.* Where a significant number or proportion of the population eligible to be served needs service or information in a language other than English in order effectively to be informed of or to participate in the Program, the State agency shall take reasonable steps considering the size and concentration of such population, to provide information in appropriate languages to such persons. This requirement applies with regard to required Program information except certification forms which are used only by local agency staff. The State agency shall also ensure that all rights and responsibilities listed on the certification form are read to these applicants in the appropriate language.

§ 246.9 Fair hearing procedures for participants.

(a) *Availability of hearings.* The State agency shall provide a hearing procedure through which any individual may appeal a State or local agency action which results in a claim against the individual for repayment of the cash value of improperly issued benefits or results in the individual's denial of participation or disqualification from the Program.

(b) *Hearing system.* The State agency shall provide for either a hearing at the State level or a hearing at the local level which permits the individual to appeal a local agency decision to the State agency. The State agency may adopt local level hearings in some areas, such as those with large case-loads, and maintain only State level hearings in other areas.